



**CALIFORNIA
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
AUTHORITY**

BRIEFING: FEBRUARY 2010 BOARD OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA ITEM #4

TO: Committee Chairman Katz and Members

FROM: Jeffrey M. Barker, Deputy Director

DATE: January 27, 2010

RE: Statewide Communications and Outreach Update.

Purpose

Operations Committee Chairman Katz requested an update of outreach and communications activities pending the Department of General Services approval of the new statewide outreach/communications contract with Ogilvy PR Worldwide, which remains unexecuted as of the date of this briefing. This agenda item is for information only and therefore contains no Authority staff recommendation.

Status of Contract

Following approval by the Board, the contract with Ogilvy PR Worldwide was drawn up, signed by all parties, and delivered to DGS on December 14, 2009. On December 31, 2009, DGS responded that the contract had been disapproved and returned with multiple queries. The contract was received by the Authority following the holiday on January 4, 2010. The Authority then answered those queries and resubmitted the contract on January 13, 2010. As of the date of this briefing, DGS had not yet responded as to the status of the contract.

Interim Changes

As you are aware, the Authority created the position of Deputy Executive Director for Communications, Outreach and Public Policy and filled that position in August 2009, approximately six months ago. Since that time, it has been the Deputy Director's chief goal to put in place a new outreach/communications team and to improve and increase outreach efforts.

In the interim, prior to the execution of the contract with Ogilvy, a number of changes have taken place to improve communications and outreach despite the lack of new or increased resources. They are outlined below:

Legislator/Stakeholder Updates:

At the request of Board Chairman Pringle, a semi-weekly project update from the Executive Director to Board members has been created and is being made available to legislators, legislative staff, and stakeholders. Additionally, the report is made available to the general public by its posting on the Authority's Web site. The report began in late August 2009.

Web Site:

Prior to bringing on a new Web team alongside the new communications and outreach contract, the Authority is pursuing improvements to its Web site to improve the accessibility of information and to add features. The Authority's Web site over the past six months is being updated more frequently, features more documents than before, has added audio from Board committee meetings, has added a public meeting calendar feature. Additionally, a number of new revisions and features are underway, including making project section information more easily navigable and updating language of commonly visited pages of the Web site.

New Media:

Timed with the application deadline for ARRA funds, on Oct. 2, 2009, the Authority launched a Twitter site and a companion Posterous site by which project updates, public meetings, pictures, videos, and more can be easily shared online. As of January 24, the Authority's Twitter site had 674 followers, and has been adding several followers each day.

Public Meetings:

In the past six months, the Authority has increased its participation in general public meetings. For example, in the week of January 18-22, the Authority participated in public information meetings in Fresno, Anaheim, and Palo Alto. It has established an initiative to hold public meetings within each segment for general outreach reasons rather than pegged only to milestones within the environmental review process.

Stakeholder Outreach:

The Authority has made an increased effort to communicate and contact stakeholders, including regional transportation partners and labor and business groups. This is an area that will be formalized and improved as a top priority with the new statewide communications and outreach contractor.

Media Monitoring:

The Authority has improved the quality of its daily media monitoring operation, both in format and in hour of delivery. This is the core of a successful communications operation.

Board Member Updates:

The Authority has endeavored to increase communication to Board members. From the Communications and Outreach operation, that has meant flagging news articles, the possibility of news articles, sending read-outs from public meetings, increasing awareness of public events, and attempting to more frequently engage Board members in media opportunities such as writing op-eds and participating in speaking events.

Internal Protocol:

The new Deputy Executive Director has set a number of new internal communications protocols to ensure that: 1) there is one point of review ensuring that all materials bearing an Authority logo are accurate and uniform, 2) anything posted to the Authority's Web site is reviewed and approved by the Deputy Executive Director, 3) no Authority staff or consultant representative speaks publicly, including to the media, without the prior expressed permission of the Deputy Executive Director.

Key Points:

The Authority has also instituted a system of outlining "key points" related to significant events such that all Authority staff, consultants, and stakeholders are provided with uniform information and public speaking guidance.

Ogilvy Pro-Bono Work

Ogilvy, prior to its contract being executed and to being on payroll, has volunteered to begin work for the Authority, including:

- Taking over morning news media clip monitoring, and ensuring the daily delivery of news clips prior to 9 p.m.
- Beginning the work of investigating and auditing the Authority's current outreach and communications operation for the purposes of advising the Authority on needed changes.
- Advising, in a strategic role, the Authority's Deputy Executive Director, on significant events and milestones in the project's development.

Next Steps

The Authority is hopeful that the contract with Ogilvy will be executed by the time of the February Operations Committee meeting. Within its first 30 days, Ogilvy will conduct a thorough audit of the Authority's communications and outreach operation and be prepared to present to the Board a detailed recommendation and workplan.